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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 CAIRO 002343

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR NEA/ELA, AF/SPG

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [SU](#) [EG](#)
SUBJECT: THE ARAB LEAGUE ON SUDAN

REF: A. CAIRO 1603
[1](#)B. CAIRO 2264

Classified By: Minister Counselor for Economic and Political Affairs
William R. Stewart for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: The Arab League (AL) Advisor on Africa Affairs said the AL is pleased with the progress that the Government of Sudan (GoS) has made on the AL's Solution Package, based on his meetings with numerous Sudanese leaders in November (reftel A). He highlighted Sudan's improved relations with Chad, a commitment to UNAMID troop deployment, and a Sudanese legislative bill, which would make it possible to try people accused of crimes in Darfur as positive steps taken by the GoS. The AL believes the Sudan People's Initiative (SPI) is a starting point for the Qatari-sponsored talks in Doha. No date has been set for the Doha meeting, but efforts continue to recruit Darfur rebel leaders to participate in the talks and there are plans for preliminary Qatar/AL/African Union coordination meeting. End Summary.

[1](#)2. (SBU) Zeid al-Sabban, the Arab League's Advisor to the Secretary General on African Affairs told us November 3 that he had met with Sudanese Foreign Minister Deng Alor, National Congress Party (NCP) Foreign Minister Mustafa Osman Ismail, and Sudanese Presidential Advisor Nafie Ali Nafie. Sabban concluded that the Government of Sudan (GoS) is committed to using the Sudan People's Initiative (SPI) and Qatari Initiative to resolve the Darfur crisis because its solution is necessary to maintain the CPA, satisfy the ICC, and improve Sudan's relations with its neighbors.

Sudan's Progress on AL Solution Package

[1](#)3. (C) Sabban said discussions with Nafie focused on the progress that the GoS made since the announcement of the Arab League Solution Package in late July. Nafie told Sabban that the NCP submitted a draft amendment to the constitution that would change the penal code in Sudan to include genocide and crimes against humanity. Sabban told us Nafie assured him that the amendment would be ratified "soon." Sabban classified the draft amendment as a "major step" in the process. He said that Nafie was also keen to point out the improvement in the situation in Darfur, the arrest of Janjawid leader Ali Khushayb, and Sudan's improved relations with Chad as evidence of the GoS' commitment to the AL Solution Package. Nafie told Sabban that Sudan and Chad would officially re-exchange Ambassadors in the coming week, approximately six months after the two countries severed relations over accusations of support for armed rebels. Nafie also assured Sabban that 60 percent of UNAMID forces would be deployed by the end of the year, with 80 percent deployment by March 2009. Sabban said the Arab League welcomed the GoS' actions, assessed that Sudan had shown

"very good signs" since the announcement of the "Solution Package," and stressed the AL was working to preserve the progress. However, he emphasized to Nafie that AL, African Union and United Nations observation of the Sudanese process was critical to its success.

¶4. (C) Sabban said that discussions with Alor were "open and frank." Alor told him that the NCP's refusal to deal with the ICC and push for an Article 16 was not in the best interests of the country, or conducive to achieving peace in Sudan. Alor instead prefers to deal with the ICC indictment, and actively defend President Bashir against the charges.

Sudan People's Initiative: A Starting Point for Doha

¶5. (C) Sabban said there were initial doubts about the potential for success of the SPI. However, he now believes that the SPI serves as a starting point for discussions in Doha. According to Sabban, no date has been set for the Doha talks. He said the Government of Qatar (GoQ) is waiting to invite "all the important parties," to Doha, but prior to talks with the Sudanese parties there will be a preliminary meeting that will include the Qatari delegation and the Arab League/African Union committee to share information on what progress has been made. (note: The Arab League/African Union committee includes Qatar, Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Morocco, Saudi Arabia and Syria on the Arab side and Burkina Faso, Nigeria, Senegal, South Africa and Tanzania on the African side. End note.) When queried about the role of UN/AU Chief Mediator Djibril Bassole, Sabban said Bassole "knows how to

CAIRO 00002343 002 OF 002

play his cards," and the coordination of his efforts with Doha and the Arab/African committee is crucial to the success of the Qatari Initiative. Sabban said Bassole's role is to engage in shuttle diplomacy with all the players and bring them to the negotiating table.

¶6. (C) Sabban told us that discussions with Darfuri rebel leaders to join the Qatari Initiative have produced mixed results, but he believes that the involvement of the Darfur armed movements, at this point, is not necessary for success.

He told us that JEM leader Khalil Ibrahim has expressed his willingness to go to Doha. Sabban bemoaned the lack of leadership among the Fur and said current leaders were "obstacles to peace." He told us that SLA/M leader Abdul Wahid al-Nur did not want to participate in talks with the GoS because to do so would "give oxygen to Bashir's regime." Sabban stated that al-Nur was "too attached to the West" and "has bad relations with Egypt, Libya and all the African countries." However, Sabban said Nur is "unpredictable" and there still is a 30 percent chance he could decide to participate in the Doha talks. Sabban called SLA/M Unity leader Abdel Shafie "a mess" and said discussions with him on his participation in talks were not productive. Sabban also was uneasy that to date there was little talk of who would represent the Darfur Arabs at the talks. He said that many assumed the GoS would represent the Arabs, but he opined that the GoS did not represent the Darfur Arabs.

¶7. (C) Comment: The Arab League argues to us that its "Solution Package" is succeeding in Sudan, and has laid the groundwork for the SPI and subsequent talks in Qatar. However, it is evident that Sabban is concerned that none of the major Darfur rebel leaders have agreed to participate in the Doha talks. Despite public statements of support for the Qatari/AL/AU peace initiative by FM Aboul Gheit, Egypt remains skeptical of the plan (reftel B). The AL will continue to try to convince rebel leaders to agree to talks in Doha, but rebel group leaders and members--residing in Cairo--tell us that AL efforts will not succeed because the AL is perceived as being too close to the GoS to be an impartial arbiter.

